

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 EB-07

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R 091633Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0003

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

USMISSION OECD PARIS

AMCONSUL BELFAST

AMCONSUL EDINBURGH

AMCONSUL LIVERPOOL

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, EGEN, UK, EEC

SUBJECT: MRS. THATCHER COMMITS CONSERVATIVE PARTY TO
SUPPORT GOVERNMENT ON EEC REFERENDUM

REF: LONDON 5332

1. DURING PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE APRIL 8, MARGARET
THATCHER STATED THAT CONSERVATIVE PARTY WILL SUPPORT CON-
TINUED BRITISH MEMBERSHIP IN EUROPE, THUS UNEQUIVOCALLY
REMOVING THREAT OF POSSIBILITY CONSERVATIVES MIGHT DENY
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GOVERNMENT SUPPORT ON REFERENDUM IN EFFORT TO BRING WIL-

SON DOWN. LATTER HAD BEEN SUGGESTED IN LENGTHY DAILY TELEGRAPH ARTICLE A FEW WEEKS AGO AND OBVIOUSLY HAD BEEN CONSIDERED FROM TACTICAL BASIS BY PARTY (REF LONDON'S 284 MARCH 25, 1975).

2. MRS. THATCHER MADE DIRECT REFERENCE TO SPLIT IN LABOR PARTY, NOTING THAT WILSON AT THIS TIME WAS FORCED TO RELY MORE ON HIS POLITICAL OPPONENTS THAN ON HIS ALLEGED FRIENDS. CONSERVATIVES HAD, HOWEVER, CONSISTENTLY VOTED FOR MEMBERSHIP IN EUROPE BY LARGE MAJORITY AND WOULD NOT THINK OF PERFORMING "W-TURNS (DOUBLE U-TURNS) ON THIS ISSUE."

3. MRS. THATCHER SUCCINCTLY OUTLINED MAJOR REASONS BRITAIN SHOULD REMAIN IN COMMON MARKET, CONCLUDING THAT WITHDRAWAL WOULD MEAN BRITAIN WAS ABROGATING A TREATY, WHICH WOULD BE BAD FOR COUNTRY, ITS RELATIONS WITH REST OF THE WORLD AND BAD FOR FUTURE TRADING RELATIONSHIPS.

4. COMMENT: MRS. THATCHER'S SPEECH WAS ENTHUSIASTICALLY RECEIVED BY CONSERVATIVE MEMBERS. MEDIA HAVE PRAISED HER DEBATING SKILLS AND THE FORCEFULNESS OF ARGUMENTATION, NOTING HER COMMENTS REMOVED ANY LINGERING DOUBTS THAT THE CHANGE IN TORY LEADERSHIP HAD BROUGHT ANY TEMPERING OF THE PARTY'S POLICY ON EUROPE. THE TIMES, WHICH HAS BEEN SKEPTICAL OF MRS. THATCHER, REPORTED APRIL 9 HER SPEECH WAS SKILLFUL BLEND OF MAXIMUM SUPPORT TO EUROPE AND MINIMUM ASSISTANCE TO WILSON, FIRMLY AND FINALLY ESTABLISHING HER AS UNDISPUTED LEADER OF PARTY.

5. HEAVYWEIGHTS FOR TORIES ON REFERENDUM CONTINUE TO BE MRS. THATCHER AND HEATH, BOTH OF WHOM FAR OUTSHINE WHITELAW WHO IS OSTENSIBLY THE TORY REPRESENTATIVE ON THE PRO-EUROPE "UMBRELLA" ORGANIZATION. SHADOW FCO SPOKESMAN MAUDLING HAS NOT YET BEEN A SIGNIFICANT ACTOR. HEATH MADE HIS INITIAL FORAY SPEAKING TO A YOUNG CONSERVATIVE GROUP APRIL 5 IN HASTINGS, WHERE HE WAS MOST ENTHUSIASTICALLY RECEIVED. RICHARDSON

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MEMBERSHIP, CENTRAL LEGISLATURE, POLITICAL PARTIES, POLITICAL LEADERS, PARTY LEADERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 09 APR 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: MorefiRH
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975LONDON05333
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750124-0110
From: LONDON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750468/aaaackap.tel
Line Count: 98
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 LONDON 5332
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: MorefiRH
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 16 APR 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <16 APR 2003 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <21 MAY 2003 by MorefiRH>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MRS. THATCHER COMMITS CONSERVATIVE PARTY TO SUPPORT GOVERNMENT ON EEC REFERENDUM
TAGS: PINT, PFOR, EGEN, UK, EEC, (THATCHER, MARGARET)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006